

Message

From: Gutro, Doug [Gutro.Doug@epa.gov]
Sent: 1/14/2020 2:59:05 PM
To: Cote, Mel [Cote.Mel@epa.gov]; Moraff, Kenneth [Moraff.Ken@epa.gov]
CC: Deegan, Dave [Deegan.Dave@epa.gov]; Melanson, Kate [Melanson.Kate@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Bass River dredging article

-----Original Message-----

From: Gosselin, Elizabeth (Beth) CIV USARMY CENAE (USA) <Elizabeth.D.Gosselin@usace.army.mil>
Sent: Wednesday, December 18, 2019 10:33 AM
To: Turley, Tammy R NAE <Tammy.R.Turley@usace.army.mil>; DeSista, Robert J CIV USARMY CENAE (USA) <Robert.J.Desista@usace.army.mil>; Acone, Scott E CIV USARMY CENAE (US) <Scott.E.Acone@usace.army.mil>
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Subject: Bass River dredging article

Good morning!

Flagging the resulting article for you which I think is balanced, especially given the situation.

https://www.salemnews.com/news/local_news/contaminants-put-dredging-on-hold/article_e861ee46-eb08-5d88-9b60-ce4f9129c43c.html

1. Contaminants put dredging on hold
(Salem News, December 17, 2019...by Paul Leighton)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has changed course and is now saying sediment scheduled to be dredged from the Bass River cannot be dumped in the ocean. The decision, made last week, brought the \$3 million dredging project to a halt before it even began and could cause the city to miss a February deadline for getting it done. The contractor hired by the city has already deployed his equipment and hired workers for the project and said the delay is costing him a thousand dollars a day, costs that he could ultimately bill to the city.

"We have everything at standstill here," said Kyle Burnham of Burnham Associates Inc. of Salem. "We have about a dozen guys here ready to go to work and we can't do anything."

The city announced in July that it had been awarded a \$1.4 grant from the Massachusetts Dredging Program to dredge the Bass River for the first time in more than 60 years. The City Council then approved spending \$1.5 million to match the grant.

The dredging is intended to return the river's channel to its historic depth and width, making navigation safer and more reliable. The river is home to 14 commercial fishing vessels, as well as Hill's Yacht Yard, the Bass Haven Yacht Club, and about 70 private moorings and slips, according to the city. Boats often have difficulty navigating the river at low tide. The Beverly harbor master responds about 30 times a year to boats that have been grounded.

Burnham, who won the contract to perform the dredging, said his company requested permission from the Army Corps of Engineers on Nov. 8 to proceed with the project. He said such permission usually takes a few days. Instead, he said he was informed on Dec. 9 that the project could not proceed. The surprise decision comes nearly two years after the Army Corps, which has authority over dredging in "navigable waterways," had already issued a permit for the project in March 2018. In a public notice in August 2017, the Army Corps said the dredged material had undergone "physical, chemical, and biological testing and has satisfied the criteria for ocean disposal of dredged material."

But in a letter to Mayor Mike Cahill last week, Robert DeSista, deputy chief of the regulatory division of the New England District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said a new review of data from 2008 tests showed that all four samples exceeded

Environmental Protection Agency thresholds and three samples indicated "carcinogenic risk."

As a result, the estimated 38,000 cubic yards of sediment expected to be dredged from the bottom of the Bass River cannot be dumped at the Massachusetts Bay Disposal Site, located 12 miles off the coast, as planned.

A spokesperson for the Army Corps of Engineers said the contamination was discovered during a review of the testing data in November by the Disposal Area Monitoring System, a program that monitors offshore dredged material disposal sites from Long Island Sound to Maine. The contamination made the material "unsuitable" for open-water disposal.

"Once we learned of this determination, we quickly notified the applicant," spokesperson Elizabeth Gosselin said in an email. "We have and will continue to work closely with the applicant to determine the feasibility of different disposal options to ensure this project is completed in a safe and responsible manner."

If and when an alternative site is found, the contractor will have only a few months to complete the project. Dredging cannot take place from Feb. 15 to Sept. 30 in order to minimize adverse impacts to winter flounder and shellfish resources, according to the Army Corps of Engineers. Burnham said at this point it would be "tight" to finish by February.

Burnham said dredging materials with low levels of contaminants are sometimes dumped in "confined aquatic disposal cells," which are man-made pits in harbors, but he said those sites have limited capacity.

Cahill said the city is working with the Army Corps and other agencies to find a disposal site so the project can begin and be completed by the February deadline.

"We're hoping to start very soon," Cahill said.

V/r,
Beth

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